



News from the  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II - Chairman**

1324 Longworth House Office Building - Washington DC, 20515 - <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov>

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 31, 2009**

**CONTACT:**  
**Allyson Groff or Blake Androff, 202-226-9019**

**Statement of U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II**  
**Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Oversight Hearing on**  
**The California Drought: Actions by Federal and State Agencies to**  
**Address Impacts on Lands, Fisheries, and Water Users**  
**March 31, 2009**

The Committee will come to order. The impacts of the California drought are making headlines almost daily. Last Friday, a CNBC story entitled "The Liquidity Crisis," highlighted the difficulty farmers in California face securing loans without the ability to show a guaranteed water supply. While the downturn in the economy is hitting everyone, unemployment rates in the Central Valley of California are three times the national average.

Central Valley farmers are not the only one hurting, however. Fishing communities all along the California coast are bracing themselves for another year of salmon fishery closures. Communities across the State are scrambling to implement conservation measures as water districts mandate use restrictions. In addition, the continued drought is aggravating already overly dry conditions on our federal lands in California, and placing those lands and the communities adjacent to them at great risk as we enter another season of wildfires.

To their credit, Interior Secretary Salazar and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack announced a Federal Drought Action Team nearly a month ago. I am eager to hear from the agencies as to what the Federal Drought Action team has done so far and what it plans to do in the coming months. I am also interested in learning how the Action team is coordinating with the State of California and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

I would also note that what happens in California does not stay in California. Just last week I received a letter from a woman in Connecticut imploring me to explore the impacts of drought on the economy of this country. I agree that we need to make sure we are all informed about the importance of water to our economy and are ready to act when drought hits.

I have a number of letters from California water interests which I would submit for the Record. In addition, after recognizing the Ranking Member for an opening statement, I will also recognize any other Member of the Committee to make an opening statement as well.